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# Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2534

Nov. 29, 1991

**CATTLE ESTIMATES** -- Beginning in 1992, USDA will release Cattle Inventory & Cattle on Feed reports on Fridays. When Friday is a holiday, the report will be issued the previous workday. USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service took the action because of public comments & analysis of the reports' impact on cattle prices & marketings when released on various days. The evidence supports industry comments that release early in the week disrupts marketings as traders wait for the report's information. **Contact: Kent Miller** (202) 219-0593.

**FEED GRAIN SUPPLIES DOWN** -- USDA economists say feed grain supplies for 1991-92 will be 268 million tons, down nearly 10 million tons from a year ago and the lowest level since 1983-84. A 12 million ton drop in production more than offset a 2 million ton increase in carry-in stocks. The corn supply is down and production is forecast at almost 7.5 billion bushels, 6 percent below last year. Among the other feed grains, sorghum & barley production rose 1 and 10 percent from last year. Production increased because the area harvested was larger even though yields declined. **Contact: Tom Tice** (202) 219-0840.

**THE MOST POPULAR** corn row width in Iowa, Illinois & Indiana this year was 30.5 inches or less. The three states had 35 percent, 55 percent & 60 percent of their corn in those widths in the plots sampled by USDA. The average row widths in the three states were 34, 32.2 & 31.6 inches, respectively. More corn trivia -- plants per acre, 22,800 in Iowa, 23,700 in Illinois & 22,400 in Indiana. And, the number of ears per acre: 21,600, 21,800 & 20,300, respectively, for the plots sampled in the three states. **Source: Crop Production.**

**NEW DATA FINDS HEALTHIER MOMS & BABIES** -- USDA has new information supporting earlier findings that women and children who participate in USDA's Womens Infants & Children (WIC) are healthier and have lower Medicaid costs. "We're delighted to see this new data," says **Catherine Bertini**, assistant secretary of agriculture for food & consumer services. "It shows even more clearly that there is a strong association between prenatal WIC participation and better health for mothers and infants, with lower Medicaid costs as a result." **Contact: Phil Shanholtzer** (703) 305-2000.

**TV HOLIDAY SCHEDULE** -- USDA's Television News Service will once again fill the December schedule with lots of feature stories. Some are new, some are "just for the holidays" and some are "golden oldies" from the past year. During the week of Christmas & New Years, the feeds will be exclusively features. Hope this helps your programming. Happy Holidays from **DeBoria Janifer, Lynn Wyvill & Pat O'Leary!**

**EXERCISE IS THE KEY TO LONG-TERM WEIGHT CONTROL** -- Exercise is essential for successful, long-term weight control, says Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service nutritionist **Beth Reames**. Among the benefits of exercise are: keeping weight off, burning calories, preserving & building muscle, increasing metabolic rate and helping control appetite. Reames has other benefits of exercise. **Contact: Beth Reames** (504) 388-4141.

**WHEAT PRODUCTION CRITICAL** -- The size of the 1992 U.S. wheat crop is critically important to 1992-93 supplies, USDA economists say, because the 1991-92 carry-out stocks are lower than any time since 1974-75. Next year's production must increase by more than 350 million bushels for next year's supplies to match last year's almost 2.9 billion bushels. U.S. wheat production should be higher in 1992 because producers are expected to plant more wheat and wheat prices have outstripped those of most alternative crops in recent months. **Contact: Ed Allen** (202) 219-0840.

**AG OUTLOOK** -- For U.S. farmers, 1991 has been a stark reminder that nature ultimately has the upper hand in agriculture. In June & July, farmers in the Corn Belt coped with dry weather. In the Delta, heavy spring rains delayed soybean, cotton & rice plantings. Lack of moisture in Kansas early this fall means the winter wheat crop there is off to a poor start. In California where farmers are still wrestling with a five-year dry spell, a whitefly infestation is creating problems for melons & winter veggies in the Imperial Valley, America's winter salad bowl. The resulting cut in supplies of winter vegetables will lead to higher retail prices for consumers through early 1992. On the other hand, there will be abundant supplies of pork & poultry for the holidays & continuing through early next year. **Contact: Barbara Claffey** (202) 219-0313.

**FIELD TESTS OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED PLANTS** -- During September & October, USDA issued eight permits to commercial companies to field test genetically engineered crop plants. "USDA has been issuing certification permits since 1987 for controlled field trials of certain genetically engineered crops in small, isolated plots," says **Terry L. Medley** director of biotechnology, biologics & environmental protection for USDA's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service. **Contact: Amichai Heppner** (301) 436-5222.

**HAIRY PLANT TRAITS MAY FOIL INSECTS** -- A family of legumes called annual medics that have a hairy genetic trait may provide the genetic material to help protect alfalfa from alfalfa weevil and potato leafhoppers. The annual medics have stems that are full of tiny hairs that act like a fence and block the pest larvae from reaching the plant's leaves. Without the leaves as food, the insect will starve on the stem. The annual medics' genetic trait is worth examining as a "natural way to protect farmers' alfalfa crops now vulnerable to alfalfa weevil larvae and potato leafhoppers," says **Gary Bauman**, a USDA plant geneticist. **Contact: Gary R. Bauman** (301) 344-2649.

*Editor: Marci Hilt Phone: (202) 720-6445  
Fax: (202) 690-2165*



## FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

**AGRICULTURE USA #1799** -- The whitefly has invaded western fruit & vegetable farms. **Maria Bynum** reports on the possible effects of farmers & consumers. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

**CONSUMER TIME #1281** -- Christmas tree prices; Christmas tree farming -- a labor of love; Christmas tree care; home ownership -- still an American dream; poinsettias -- a plant for the holidays. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

**AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1790** -- USDA News Highlights; farm income outlook for 1992; a possible new threat to western forests; the perils of Christmas tree farming; the "articulated" rail car. (Weekly reel of news features.)

**NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1448** -- Evergreen tradition; boughs of holly; selecting a tree; history of mistletoe; fruit fly ID. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

**UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE** -- Wed., Dec. 4, coverage of outlook conference continues with stories planned on the outlook for grains, aquaculture, fruits & vegetables, cotton, tobacco, farm income & livestock; Thurs., Dec. 5, more outlook conference stories on food labels, rural development; Tues., Dec. 10, crop/weather update; Wed., Dec. 11, U.S. crop report, world ag supply & demand; Thurs., Dec. 12, world ag/grain situation, world oilseed situation, world cotton situation. **(These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.)**

**DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.**

Material changed at 5 p.m., EST, each working day.

## FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

**FEATURES** -- **Dave Carter** takes a look at supermarkets in a special five-part series.

**ACTUALITIES** -- USDA meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on weather & crops; USDA economist **Barbara Claffey** on the ag outlook; USDA economist **Diane Bertelsen** on fruits; USDA economist **Steve McDonald** on U.S. exports.

**UPCOMING FEATURES** -- **DeBoria Janifer** reports on cataract research; **Pat O'Leary** takes a look at farm marketing in Poland; **Lynn Wyvill** reports on holiday buffets.

**EVERY OTHER WEEK** -- **Agriculture Update**, five minutes of USDA farm program information in "news desk" format with B-roll.

*Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, Transponder 12D (Channel 23), audio 6.2 or 6.8:*

**Thursdays** from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EST, **Saturdays** from 10 - 10:45 a.m., EST, and **Mondays** from 8 - 8:45 a.m., EST.

## OFFMIKE

**WHITE FLIES**...have reached the central valley of California, but will be killed by freezing nighttime temperatures, says **Walt Shaw** (KRAK, Sacramento, Calif.). Walt has also been covering efforts by rice growers in the state to clean the environment. The 1992 plan includes water conservation & establishing a long-range plan to stop the burning of rice stubble.

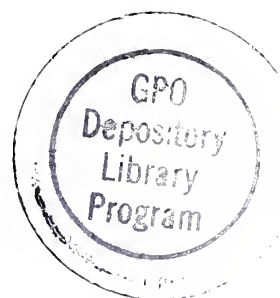
**MIDDAY AUCTION REPORT**...is a new addition to the noontime program, says **Larry DeSha** (KGNC, Amarillo, Texas). It's a compilation of the past week & the day's auction developments. Larry says during Dec. 3-5 all farm programming will originate at the Amarillo Farm & Ranch Show. Six hundred exhibitors will greet an expected 25,000 people. KGNC is a cosponsor.

**FARM SHOW**...in Fremont, Neb., was covered by **Kim Dlouhy** (WOW, Omaha, Neb.). Kim says while the event was fairly well attended, farmer attitudes were cautious. Grain prices lead the list of concerns.

### *Farm Broadcasters Letter*

Office of Public Affairs  
Radio-TV Division  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

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**FARM PROGRAMMING**...reflects what he learned at the recent NAFB conference, says **Jerry Gehman** (WASG, Atmore, Ala.). He picked up program ideas, learned about new products & is giving more air time to GATT negotiations because the outcome will affect local agriculture. Jerry says the cotton harvest is still underway because farmers planted about twice as much -- acreage went from 12,000 to 22,000.

**TWO MAJOR ISSUES**...being covered by **Al Gustin** (KFYR, Bismarck, N.D.) are the free trade agreements with Canada & Mexico and wetland regulations. Al says at upcoming winter meetings there will be discussion about how the agreements can affect local farmers. He detects a lack of farmer understanding & info about wetlands regulations. The Gustin's have bought a 100 year-old Victorian house, which was on jacks getting ready to be moved 30 miles to their farm when we spoke. Al says his free time is going to be limited in the foreseeable future.

*Vic Powell*

**VIC POWELL**  
Chief, Radio & TV Division